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FOOD IN YOUR TIME

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Research has supplied educators, parents, and all interested persons with a great deal of information about what teenagers think and do and want. Probably above everything else, you want to control your environment--what you do, what you are, and what other people do and are in relation to you. Most of you also want to understand your environment. You realize that the more you understand about the many facets of your environment, the better chance you have to control it toward an effectual and interesting life. In every area of living, knowledge helps to make us free and you also want freedom--freedom to make your own decisions, freedom of choice.

This is fine! You should be wanting to control and understand your environment, to make your own decisions, and to be responsible for yourself. In a very short time you will be expected to assume responsibilities as individuals, as family members, and as citizens. You are moving from childhood dependency to adult independence, from having your life controlled by adults toward controlling it yourself, with full responsibility as a grownup and a parent. I have great faith in you and I am willing to trust you to make a good accounting of yourselves.

All of us must be realistic, however, and recognize that even sturdy, intelligent young Americans are not necessarily perfect any more than adults are perfect. Everyone at every age needs guidance in many complex phases of living and learning to live better. For example, you need guidance in achieving and maintaining a level of well-being that will make it possible for you to enjoy a meaningful life of service and satisfaction.

Food is one of the first aspects of environment over which you gain control and thereby express your independence of adult supervision. Often in your eagerness to demonstrate your independence in food selection you act without understanding or knowledge and thereby jeopardize your growth and maturation and health in the years ahead. Food is a large part of everyone's environment, and is never more important than during the teen years. During two or three of the teen years you are growing faster than at any time since you were an infant. This usually happens to boys after they are 14 or 15 years old, and to girls after they are 11 or 12 years old. For a short time many girls are taller than boys of the same age. Even after your visible growth in height and weight starts to slow down or to cease, your requirements remain high for several years. Nutrients and food energy must be stored to make maturer tissues, firmer muscles, heavier, more compact bones--to make an adult body that will be an asset to you throughout the many decades ahead.

Consider some of the great advances that have been made in controlling our environment in relation to health. The science of medicine has given us anesthetics and surgical procedures to aid in correcting errors and abnormalities, sterile techniques and immunizations to prevent many diseases, and antibiotics to fight others. The science of nutrition has given us knowledge of the elements and compounds the body needs for building maintenance, and proper functioning at every age and the foods that will supply these needs. The application of such knowledge has made it possible for us to be better fed than ever before, and to grow stronger, healthier bodies.

One fact stands out in these advances--the only material in our environment which works from within the body cells is food. Only the substances in food are intimate to the "inner life" of our cells!

Only food can provide enough of all the materials needed for building muscles, bone, blood, and other tissues as you grow toward adult size and maturity. Only food can supply the energy for your growth and for your daily activities.

Research studies tell us about the eating habits of many of you teenagers in supplying these nutrient and energy-yielding materials:

1. Fortunately many teenagers are well fed. Much of the credit for this goes to your parents. Your education in nutrition and food habits began almost as soon as you were born. Training you in good food habits was both the right and obligation of your parents.
2. Too many teenage girls are underfed because they want to have a good figure and go about it in the wrong way. They skip meals and choose food so unwisely that they short-change themselves in many essential nutrients.
3. Some teenagers are overfed on calories but still are not getting all the other nutrients in adequate amounts.
4. Some teenagers skip breakfast. You never outgrow your need for some food at the beginning of the day. You are not very grownup if you think breakfast is "kid stuff."
5. Some teenagers rebel at the family and school meals served to them and depend heavily on getting their nutrients and calories from snacks. As far as we know, there is nothing wrong with this practice if all the snack selections are carefully made. But this really takes careful planning and more "know how" than the average teenager has. It also takes more time than a person usually wants to spend on food selection.
6. Some teenagers rebel at eating stereotype meals and favor unusual food combinations. Again, there is nothing wrong with this if the total supply of nutrients and energy is sufficient to meet all of the needs of the growing, maturing body. This, too, takes "know how" but can be fun.

Your freedom, therefore, to eat what and when you choose, without short-changing yourselves nutritionally either now or in the future, depends on knowledge. The more you know about your nutritional needs and how to supply these needs with food the greater will be your freedom of choice. You may not choose to be an expert on the composition of foods

and the detailed physiological requirements for the half-hundred plus nutrients that the body needs from food. There are, however, some research-based principles that everyone who wishes to be nutritionally fit can know and be guided by: (1) There is a cause and effect relationship between the kind and amount of food you eat and your level of well-being; (2) There is also a cause and effect relationship between your level of well-being and the attainment of the goals in your life; (3) A combination of different kinds of foods is needed to supply all the nutritional needs of the body, and these are needed every day. "A Daily Food Guide--Food for Fitness" from the U.S. Department of Agriculture was developed to give you maximum freedom of choice of different kinds of food and still be assured of an adequate supply of nutrients; (4) All food is good and therefore it can be easy and logical and interesting to eat a variety of foods. (5) Good food contributes to good living, as evidenced by physical, mental, and social well-being.

Since you teenagers are all interested in fitness I shall add a sixth point. Fitness is a fine balance of good nutrition, physical and mental activity, rest and recreation, immunization and good health practices. You can be well nourished and still not be totally fit but you can never be totally fit without being well nourished.

Food for the nation

Let's change from your specific area of freedom and responsibility and consider the other phases of food in your time--the national scene and the world scene. As informed, emerging adults, you probably know that the United States ranks high among the nations of the world in food policies and practices. We have an abundance of wholesome food unparalleled in variety--enough to provide an adequate diet for everyone in the country.

But you also know that even in this prosperous country some persons cannot afford the food they need and want. These economically underprivileged persons are found among the unemployed and underemployed, many of whom chronically have low incomes or are dependent on welfare agencies.

We have a program of direct food distribution to subsidize the consumption of several million needy families every year. The Federal Government makes the foods available and the local governments decide what foods to distribute and how and to whom they shall be given. Foods include such items as nonfat dry milk, flour, cornmeal, rice, butter, and lard, dried whole eggs, dry beans, peanut butter, and oatmeal.

There is also a Food Stamp Program operating in certain areas in the country to help needy families buy more nutritious diets. Eligible families buy food stamps with the money they would ordinarily spend for food and they are given enough additional stamps free to buy an adequate food supply. The stamps are good for purchasing food in cooperating neighborhood stores. Over 300,000 needy persons are being helped in 39 counties and 3 cities.

The National School Lunch Program is now available to about two out of three children attending elementary and secondary schools. This is supplemented by a Special Milk Program which provides additional milk at reduced cost to school children.

People may be poorly fed for several reasons other than the lack of money or the nonavailability of food. There are many who do not know, or are not convinced of the value of the guidance that science now offers for food selection. Some are teenagers, especially girls, others are housewives, obese persons, and elderly persons. Many of these people are spending more than enough money at the supermarket, restaurant, and

drug store to buy a nutritious, flavorful, and enjoyable diet, but the food choices they make do not supply an adequate diet.

Poor food habits, prejudices, and even fear, are greater barriers to wise food selection than the lack of technical information. Some people are overanxious about their food and its nutritive value, even its safety. People in this country spend 500 million dollars or more every year for vitamin capsules, pills, and food supplements. The food faddists are having a field day. Your knowledge and leadership can do much to build public confidence in modern nutritional knowledge so that people will be more willing to practice what they learn about nutrition.

Food for the world

When we shift our attention to the world scene we are viewing food and nutrient deficiencies in the most acute sense. There have never been so many hungry and sick and suffering people as there are in the world today.

Sometimes we talk almost glibly of one-half to two-thirds of the world's people being hungry. One of the international studies suggests that out of the total of 61 nations almost 2 billion people, or 69 percent of the population, are poorly fed or hungry. Moreover, the population that is hungry is increasing in numbers faster than the population that is well fed.

The security of the world demands that greater efforts be made to correct the imbalance between the hungry and the well fed. A community of nations cannot long exist with such devastatingly sharp contrasts between the haves and the have-nots.

Important leadership for this urgent task can come from FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization, one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations family. It has responsibility for coordinating the

efforts of the nations of the world to improve food production, distribution, and consumption. FAO does not produce food, it cannot even buy and distribute surplus stocks of food. It does take responsibility for technical assistance on a broad front in agriculture, nutrition, and home economics. Its activities have led the world many steps along the road toward food enough for all.

In 1960 FAO intensified its effort by launching a 5-year Freedom from Hunger Campaign. The purpose of the campaign is to dramatize the world's need for food, to create a receptive attitude in people and governments for all of the programs which are designed to improve the world's food supplies, and to encourage well-fed countries to help in the drive to eliminate hunger. A further purpose is to help the people in underfed countries become aware of the possibilities for improving their situation so that they will work with greater optimism and determination. It focuses on information and education, on research, and on national action programs. It recognizes that although food alone cannot bring order, decency, and peace into the world, certainly there can be no peace in a hungry world.

The U.S.A. programs designed to aid in providing food and fiber and other services to developing countries are chiefly under the Agricultural Trade Development and Assistance Act, passed by Congress in 1954. This Act is often referred to as Public Law 480, and is an effort to use our food resources, especially our surpluses, as an asset rather than a liability. Among the activities under this law you will be most familiar with the Food-for-Peace Program.

The largest operation of these programs provides for the sale of U.S.A. food and fiber to countries that are short on dollars, and our acceptance of foreign currencies instead of dollars for payment. The currencies we acquire are then used in the foreign countries. About half of the amounts have been loaned to the respective countries for economic development, especially for financing industrial and agricultural development. Some is used for meeting obligations to U.S.A. personnel working in the country--army, embassy, and other operations. Then a sizeable portion is used for U.S.A. technical assistance to the country. At present there are about 1,200 technicians and scientists stationed in 59 countries. Some of the foreign currency is used for research, market development, and technological aid basic to the progress of the country and in certain cases of benefit to the U.S.A.

Public Law 480 also provides for the barter of some of our agricultural surpluses for strategic and other materials that we need from other countries, such as manganese, chrome, and industrial diamonds.

Finally, P.L. 480 provides for the donation of that part of our surpluses that cannot be sold or bartered. These donations are made through voluntary organizations such as CARE and several church relief services, UNICEF, and UNRWA. This is called the People-to-People program and all packages are labelled "Donated by the People of the United States."

Since 1954 when Congress passed Public Law 480, the United States has shipped overseas each day, Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays included, the equivalent of three 10,000-ton shiploads of food. It would be interesting to think what would happen to our economy if some week those three ships did not leave each day carrying the bounty of our farms. Under the donation phases of the program alone, we are providing some

form of supplementary ration to more than 100 million people every day in the year. About 75 percent of these are children. Many people write to the President and ask, "Why don't we use our surpluses to feed the hungry in the world?" In the last calendar year, we moved some \$2.2 billion worth of food for this purpose.

We are using our food to help achieve America's foreign policy goals. Our whole postwar history through each administration has emphasized that the goal of America's foreign policy is to strengthen the nations of the free world, to build up the strength and the ability of the individuals in these countries to live a better life. It is in our interest to have stability and growth in the world today, and the food that we have in abundance here and that we can help others to produce in abundance, can be a keystone in the development of that improved living for people everywhere.

One of the newer uses of food actually has been in what is known as food-for-wages schemes. We are reaching now some 5 million people with programs in which they do community projects and in return receive some form of food as the wages. We are trying trying to rebuild the concept of the dignity of work.

We have been able to capitalize in a pattern of the Incas in Latin America. It is known as the mit'a, and is a form of community work. Long before we thought of community development the Indians of the area had a custom of giving one day a month for work on community projects. The custom fell into disuse because the Indians were on the verge of starvation and could not spare even one day a month from the task of finding food. Now they are building a road to a deposit of stone and sand, and they will sell these for construction work in the city. Our food-for-wages program made possible this progress toward self-sufficiency.

To many, nothing would seem simpler than giving good, wholesome food to people who have too little to eat. But experience shows that it is not easy to give food away. It is not cheap for the country that gives it away nor can it be absolutely free to the country that receives it. The recipient government must provide acceptable conditions for warehouse storage and for distribution of the food. Some recipient countries fear to accept too much food because it might handicap the development of their own agriculture. Some countries that export food fear that their economies might be disturbed if too much food were to be distributed free to their customers.

Some people are concerned that our distribution of cereal products under P.L. 480 may further distort rather than help balance diets of low-income groups in developing countries. Wheat can be effectively used to provide more food, but both grain products and customary diets need to be supplemented by locally produced vegetables and fruit, carefully chosen leguminous seeds, and where possible, by additional livestock products, especially milk and/or cheese. In general, our surplus foods are not available in the proportions best suited to supplement diets of poorly fed countries. Our surplus foods alone cannot feed the world, but can help nations while they increasingly become able to help themselves.

Most people in the United States think of our use of food under Food for Peace exclusively as a give-away, as a donation. Actually this accounts for only 28 percent of all the food that is shipped out of the United States. Seventy-two percent is under a form of sales pattern.

Spurred by the seriousness of the growing specter of hunger and mal-nutrition in the world, FAO called a World Food Congress which was held in Washington, D.C., last month. About 1,200 persons from more than 100 countries were invited to this "people-to-people" conference. It was

not a meeting of governments, as such. Rather, participants from all walks of life were invited in their individual capacities so that many points of view were represented.

The purpose was to focus attention on the problems of hunger and mal-nutrition on the occasion of two important dates: (1) the midpoint of the worldwide Freedom from Hunger Campaign of FAO, and (2) the 20th anniversary of the founding of FAO, which took place at Hot Springs, Virginia in 1943.

At the opening of the Congress, President Kennedy said, "So long as freedom from hunger is only half achieved--so long as two-thirds of the nations of the world have food deficits--no citizen, no nation can afford to feel satisfied or secure. We have the ability, we have the means, and we have the capacity to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth in our lifetime. We need only the will."

The President emphasized the urgency of the world situation by pointing out that present food productivity must be trebled or quadrupled by the end of this century to meet the basic needs of the expected population. He cited the elimination of hunger as the primary task of this generation.

At the opening ceremony, the President of India, Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, stated that the many peoples who had won their political freedom in recent years had "aroused themselves from the torpor of the centuries." They had now to achieve freedom from poverty, illiteracy, and want.

Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, challenged the Congress to lay out a strategy translating agricultural surpluses from economic liabilities to social assets.

Secretary of Agriculture Freeman charged the Congress with this statement:

"Let it never be said of this generation that we were able to orbit the earth with satellites, but that we were unable to put bread and rice into the hands of hungry children. Let it never be said that a generation that could literally reach for the stars was unable to reach food--and grasp--the potential for plenty, and progress, and peace that is at hand."

Several proposals for eradicating hunger and malnutrition from the face of the globe emerged from the World Food Congress. It was stressed that

1. Plans of action for developing countries should be directed toward "self-help." These countries will need guidance--technical and educational, funds, and in many instances, food until leaders can be trained, the economy stabilized, and enough food can be produced or purchased for the people.
2. In many instances, problems in other areas of living such as economics, health, and sanitation, and education, will need attention before problems of adequate nutrition can be approached.
3. Work in the many areas from the policy to the operational level must be planned so that all phases of a program are moving forward simultaneously. No one group can accomplish the job alone--it must be a coordinated, cooperative enterprise if hunger is to be eradicated and desirable levels of nutritional health achieved.

Summary

I started this discussion of food in your time by talking about individuals--teenagers. Having considered food for the nation and food for the world, I want to return now to the individual--you.

Beyond a certain point, good health and good nutrition are the responsibility of the individual. And that "certain point" separates the things that governments and mass action can accomplish and the things that require

individual action. A relatively small number of public leaders can make decisions and take action in the treatment and control of many diseases through vaccination, immunization, sanitation, a safe water supply, specific drug therapy, and other public health measures. Similarly governments can act to keep adulterated, unwholesome, contaminated products off the market. They can provide enrichment of salt with iodine, or of refined cereals with B-vitamins and certain minerals, or milk with vitamin D. They can distribute food to the needy throughout the world. They do all this and can do much more if such services are wanted and supported by the public and policymakers.

Wise food selection, however, in the market or at the table cannot be accomplished by government action. No one can compel each person to eat an adequate diet even when the food is available. Government cannot decide for people the choices or combinations they shall make among the foods available to them, or the proportions in which they shall balance one kind of foodstuff against another. These choices and the resulting level of nutritional well-being lie with millions of individuals--both the well fed and the ill fed. Right or wrong decisions about what one will eat will make the difference between good nutrition and malnutrition, between vigor and vulnerability.

Everyone really wants the well-being and fitness that come from palatable, nutritious food served within the environmental and cultural pattern acceptable to the individual. Everyone wants the added years of life and the added life in years that come from applying the newer knowledge of nutrition in the selection and use of food. But not everyone has given really serious thought to the importance of food selection in achieving these goals.

Whether here in our homes or in far-away places, whether to suit our tastes or the tastes of another culture, good food properly prepared is a blessing and an opportunity.

Whether it is food for the world or food for the individual, there are problems of supply and problems of selection and acceptance. Governments can work together to solve the problems of supply but it is up to the individual whether he chooses to make the most of the supply.

Arnold Toynbee, the historian, has expressed faith in the choices that individuals are learning to make when he said "Our age will be well remembered, not for its horrifying crimes nor its astonishing inventions, but because it is the first generation since the dawn of history in which mankind dared to believe it practical to make the benefits of civilization available to the whole human race."

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